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The Asia Foundation



USAID LEGAL AID SUPPORT

USAID Legal Aid Support, a four-year activity funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), helps the Lao People’s Democratic Republic promote the rule of law through the fairer, more consistent and more transparent delivery of justice according to the law – inclusive of women, the poor and traditionally underserved populations.

Challenges persist for Lao citizens to access justice, especially for women and other historically marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and LGBTI individuals. Legal knowledge and confidence to resolve disputes or protect their rights remains low. In the quest for justice, it can also prove challenging to resolve complex disputes through mediation, arbitration, administrative applications and hearings, formal litigation before the courts and petitions. Moreover, there are a limited number of legal professionals to provide necessary services; only a small fraction of attorneys currently provide legal aid. USAID works with the Lao government to promote basic understanding of rights and obligations among citizens and to provide them with practical guidance on what support is available when their rights are threatened or violated.

IMPROVING THE LEGAL AID ENVIRONMENT

USAID works with the Government of Laos to improve the country’s legal aid system by training legal providers at the central and provincial levels, supporting legal aid services and assisting with budget advocacy to ensure that such services are sustained.

PHOTO: THATSAPHONE KEOMOUNKHOUN

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The USAID Legal Aid Support activity:

- Strengthens the Ministry of Justice, Lao Bar Association and Non-Profit Associations
- Increases access to legal aid services
- Increases sensitivity to women's rights and empowerment in law-related professions

PARTNER: USAID partners with The Asia Foundation to strengthen Laos' legal aid system.

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